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AUTHOR Offenberg, Robert M.
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ABSTRACT

La Salle College's three-track Bilingual/Bicultural Master of Arts Program is described and its first operational year (September 1982 - August 1983) is evaluated. Track I served teachers of English as a second language, Spanish as a first language, and other classes within bilingual education programs. Track II served students from other fields wishing to develop competence in Spanish: for example, nurses and police with extensive contact with the Spanish-speaking community. Track III served non-degree students, some of whom were educators. All faculty were bilingual in English and Spanish, equal emphasis was given to language, culture, and educational practice, and field experience was part of the program. The program evaluation concentrates on Tracks I and III, funded by Title VII. The classes were found to be more varied than in most graduate programs, with more than one instructional approach used in each course. The languages of instruction were both Spanish and English in all but Spanish language classes. A summer immersion program included language, workshop, and field experience components. The field work involved observation or volunteering at an institution or organization serving a Hispanic clientele. Student evaluations of instruction were generally highly positive, and negative assessments were followed up. Formative evaluation of students' progress indicated most were doing acceptable graduate work, although some would have benefited from help with mechanics such as writing and research skills. The program was generally found to be well-conceived and well-managed, consistent with the philosophy of bilingual education, and successful in helping students meet its goals. (MSE)

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AN EVALUATION OF
LA SALLE COLLEGE'S
MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN
BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL STUDIES (SPANISH)
1982-83

by

ROBERT M. OFFENBERG, Ed.D.
EXTERNAL EVALUATOR

OCTOBER, 1983

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three tracks of La Salle College's Bilingual/Bicultural Master of Arts Program were fully implemented. Track I was supported in part by Title VII, ESEA and served educators. Track II served students from other fields who wished to develop competence in the Spanish language. Track III served non-degree students and was supported in part by Title VII because some of its participants were educators. The Program was unique because all faculty were bilingual in English and Spanish, because it included field experiences, and because equal emphasis was given to language acquisition, to culture and to educational practice.

The report covers the first operational program year (9/1/82 - 8/31/83). Class observations suggested that the instructional style was more varied than usually encountered in graduate study programs. Assessment of Track I student achievement indicated that Spanish language skills, cultural understanding and teaching skills were acquired as a result of participation in the Project.

LA SALLE COLLEGE BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL MASTER OF ARTS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The La Salle College Bilingual/Bicultural Master of Arts Program is designed to provide a cadre of urban Spanish-speaking professionals who can serve the Spanish-American population of the Philadelphia metropolitan area. The program embraces three tracks, each geared to the needs of a specific group of clients:

. Track I serves teachers of English as a second language (ESL), Spanish as a first language (SFL), and other classes within Bilingual education programs.

. Track II serves a variety of non-educational personnel, such as nurses and police, who have extensive contact with the Spanish-speaking community, need to develop appropriate language skills, and can serve their clients better if they are familiar with the culture of Spanish-Americans.

. Track III is devoted to Master of Arts degree holders who need to develop Spanish language skills and become more conversant with Spanish-American culture, but do not wish to pursue a degree program.

The Program is unique in that all faculty are bilingual in Spanish and English; there is equal emphasis given to language, culture and educational practice; and there is field experience as well as classroom study. Title VII funds were used to support Track I and part of Track III. Track II was initiated with grants from other sources, including The Tinker Foundation, Inc. and the Samuel S. Fels Fund. Within the instructional program, students are not prevented from taking courses designed for tracks other than their own, providing that the courses best meet the individual's needs. As this is primarily a study of the Title VII portion of the Program, emphasis will be given to activities that comprise Track I and Track III.

RATIONALE

The project rests on the belief that the most effective educator is one who understands, and at least to some extent, shares in the historical development, culture and language of the students. Without this communality between the students and teacher, administrator or psychologist, there is a high risk that part of an interchange will be misinterpreted. For this reason, program elements rarely encountered in graduate programs for educators, such as coursework in Latin-American history and the involvement of native informants, speakers of Spanish whose speech reflects a variety of regionalisms, have been incorporated in the program.

As the primary target group of the program consists of working professionals, the classes are conducted during the evening. Two courses are conducted each semester of the academic year. In the late spring, an immersion program that includes field experiences, workshops, and language courses is conducted, so that various program areas are integrated in the students' experiences.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Program was fully implemented, with a high degree of fidelity to the specifications of the original proposal. Prior to the implementation of the program, a review of library holdings was made, and 190 titles were added. The Project Director indicated that the additions cost six thousand dollars and were supported equally by three funding sources: Title VII, The Tinker Foundation and the Samuel Fels Foundation. The titles suggest that Latin American History and Culture, Language and Language Teaching, Spanish Literature, and a variety of guides comprised the bulk of the purchases. About equal numbers of English and Spanish language titles appeared on the list of purchases.

The students were recruited in a variety of ways according to the Project Director. The evaluator examined posters with tear-off coupons that were used to make initial contact with potential students, and attractive booklets that

were sent to those who requested information. Newspaper advertising and a television program directed to the local Spanish-American community were also recruitment tools.

To be admitted to the Program, a student had to submit a transcript, a Miller Analogies Test score, and letters of recommendation. However, as the Program was "non-traditional" and some of the students were from abroad, the tendency was to admit students, rather than to make the Program exclusive.

A total of 36 students (13 in Track I, 16 in Track II, and 7 in Track III) were admitted to the Project in September, 1982, and only one serious applicant was rejected. The enrollment exceeded the 20 students indicated in the proposal by 80%. By the Spring semester, only one student, a Track II member, was failing, suggesting that the enrollees were capable of fulfilling the faculty's expectations.

A report prepared by the Project Director indicated that five of the students admitted in the Fall did not take courses during the Spring semester. None were members of Track I, indicating that the holding power of the program component that received most of its funding from Title VII was exceptionally high.

The most common profession among the students was education (15 students), followed by social work and psychotherapy (8 students) and by business and government (7 students). As expected, the educators were concentrated in the two Project elements supported by Title VII, Tracks I and III, where they accounted for 14 of 20 students.

Three courses were conducted during the Fall semester: Spanish for Educators, Dynamics of Cross-cultural Communication, and Urban Spanish I. The first course served primarily members of Track I, the second served members of all tracks, the last course served primarily members of Track II. In addition, a program of individual study was provided for two students who were

native speakers of Spanish, in which a compendium of Latin-American colloquial expressions was developed for later use in the project.

Individual differences were carefully assessed at the beginning and the end of the Spanish for Educators course. The tests indicated that most participants knew a fair amount of Spanish before the course began, and there was great emphasis on the development of oral fluency. The Dynamics of Cross-cultural Communication course emphasized the differences between the communication styles of the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Americas. Field experiences and simulations were used to help students to experience the feelings of people in environments in which they do not understand the social mores. The Urban Spanish I course used a text that was accompanied by four different workbooks, each emphasizing the language used in a career field. The students used their field's workbook and could select examination questions related to their fields. A unique element of both language courses was the assistant instructors, called "native informants," who came from various parts of Latin America and added variety to the speech patterns the students heard during the small group activities.

Three courses were offered in the Spring semester: The Techniques of Teaching English as a Second Language, designed primarily for Track I, the Comparative History and Geography of the United States and Latin America, designed for all tracks, and the Urban Spanish II course, designed primarily for Track II. As part of the evaluation, all the Spring courses were visited once or, in the case of the courses serving Track I participants, twice.

The classes were much more varied than most graduate courses, with more than one instructional approach used in each: The Spanish class included a lecture on grammar, followed by small group conversation, with the instructor working with one group, while the native informant worked with the other. All of the observed comparative history and teaching techniques classes consisted of instructor-led discussions followed by student reports about topics, books

or journal articles.

Except for the Spanish language class, where virtually no English was used, the language of the instruction and students' responses casually changed from English to Spanish, in response to the preference of the speaker or the content of an utterance. However, switching language in mid-sentence, often a sign of poor fluency, was virtually absent.

At the beginning of the second semester, the Project Director was concerned that, because no Spanish language course was then being offered to Track I, its students would lose some of the fluency they had developed. The casual use of Spanish by both faculty and students during the class discussions suggested that the concern was not warranted.

When observed, the Teaching of English as a Second Language course emphasized problems faced by Spanish-speaking children who were learning English (e.g. differences in the sentence structure and in the phonology of the two languages) and specific instructional techniques for teachers (e.g. the construction of classroom dialogues and various types of drills). Spanish-speaking students were called upon to demonstrate various types of language interference; the instructor modeled and discussed the speech patterns and gestures of native speakers of the two languages.

The observed Comparative History and Geography of the United States and Latin America classes emphasized contemporaneous events in the histories of North and South America. The goals of the explorers and settlers, the motives of the supporting European financiers, the attitudes toward the indigenous cultures, and the political and economic underpinnings of events in each region were analyzed and contrasted. Slides from the instructor's collection were used to help the students visualize the impact of the Spanish culture on the Latin American environment.

The Summer Immersion Program consisted of three components: language courses, workshops, and field experiences. The Track I language component, Spanish for Educators II, was taught by a native speaker of Spanish who had been a native informant during the school-year courses and had received very positive recommendations from both students and faculty. The course was observed twice. On both occasions, when the students entered the classroom, they were in a completely Spanish language environment, with all casual student-to-student conversation and all instructional activities taking place in the language. Two texts, based on Puerto Rican stories and legends but designed for students learning the language, were in use. The students were observed reading aloud from the texts, working out oral grammatical exercises, and discussing the content of the readings. On one occasion, articles about bilingual education, from Spanish language newspapers, supplemented the text. Two native informants supported the primary instructor and, for about half of the class periods, the students were divided into groups of four to increase the amount of time each student was able to speak. The discussions were very lively, and conveyed the impression that issues of language usage often were subordinate to voicing opinions, a sign that a high level of fluency was being developed.

The second element of the Summer Immersion Program was the workshops. For Track I, two workshops, each running for half the Program, were conducted: Development of Curriculum Materials for Teaching Spanish as a First Language, and Strategies in Teaching Reading and Writing in Bilingual Settings. Each of the workshops was observed once.

During the curriculum development workshop, strategies for preparing and using supplementary instructional materials, such as bulletin boards and instructional exercises, were discussed. The concept of the language classroom as a cultural island was developed. This was followed by a discussion of the role of professional societies in the dissemination of ideas, and samples of

various societies' publications were distributed.

The observed meeting of the teaching strategies workshop was about the structure of a daily lesson. Research about inner city school programs was discussed, as were characteristics of effective lessons (e.g. small steps, lots of practice, building in ways to check pupil progress). The instruction was teacher-centered, and was more like a traditional class than was any other session that had been observed.

Both workshops were characterized by high levels of student-teacher interaction. The relationship between the topic at hand and the concurrent field experience was often drawn by the students, indicating that the students were able to integrate these two program elements.

Guest speakers supplemented the main instruction in both Track I workshops from time to time. The speakers were not observed, but the students' comments suggested they were received enthusiastically.

The Track II Summer Immersion Program included an Urban Spanish III course and a workshop program that, under the supervision of a director of a major Latin-American community organization, presented a variety of Hispanic community leaders. The Track II program was not a Title VII activity and was not formally evaluated. Casual contact with students indicated that the workshops were well received, and that students' comments about the language class were very positive.

The third component of the Summer Immersion Program served all tracks. It consisted of field placements at twelve institutions. The common arrangement was for the student to observe or to do volunteer work at a school or organization serving an Hispanic clientele. Four Track I students were interviewed when they came to attend language classes and workshops. Three had been observing Philadelphia's oldest and most comprehensive bilingual elementary school. These students discussed what they had seen by referring to the content of the teaching methods courses they were taking. Their comments suggested that their field experience enriched their coursework in a clear, direct way. One inter-

viewee was serving as a volunteer at a hospital with an international patient population. He was assigned to helping entertain Spanish-speaking children, most of whom were far from home. He felt that the placement improved his Spanish fluency, and he confided that it helped him recognize the invalidity of some of the stereotypes he held, outcomes that were clearly consistent with the goals of the project.

After the program, 13 field-experience logs were examined for this report. Five were about schools, four and part of a fifth were about medical institutions, two were about pastoral responsibilities, one was about a museum for children, and part of one was about a community service organization. Four of the placements, all at the bilingual elementary school, were limited to observation. The other organizations used the students in volunteer roles. The best field experience logs contained cultural insights, and, occasionally, critiques of the operation of the host organizations. In contrast to the casual conversations, only rarely did the field experience logs refer to the content of the coursework, suggesting that the students had difficulty writing what they could easily say.

Two of the field experience logs were regarded as unsatisfactory by the Project Director. One consisted, primarily, of lesson plans. The other was a philosophical tract. Neither reported experiences, and comments on them suggested that another field experience would be required of the authors.

The completion of Instructor Evaluation Questionnaires by students is a part of the management of all classes at La Salle College. The students rated each instructor and course on 23 items using five point scales, and then wrote out evaluations of the strong and weak points of the instructor and the course. Although one cannot help but notice the careless way in which some students complete them, the questionnaires provide some evidence about the implementation of the program from the students' vantage point.

Fourteen sets of questionnaires were reviewed. Ten sets were the evaluation of the primary instructors, and four sets were of the language class native informants. The size of the sets ranged from 24 questionnaires, for the comparative history course, to five questionnaires for some of the native informants. Averages of the numerical ratings indicated that the quality of the instruction was usually perceived to be in the "superior" range. In eight sets, the average rating was above 4.5 on a scale that ranged from 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (superior). Two sets of ratings fell between 4.5 and 4.0. Four sets of ratings fell in the range between 4.0 and 3.0. None of the sets was below 3.0, which is labeled "average" on the questionnaires. Most comments praised the instructors. Students often critized the great amount of material in the courses and the amount of reading required, issues not to be taken seriously. A few negative comments about the class organization, the faculty preparation and the narrow range of a course's topics appeared. The Project Director was aware of these issues, had followed them up, and, in one instance, a part time faculty person resigned as a result.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Track I Courses

The Project proposal lists two objectives: demonstration of student's ability to use the Spanish language, and the student's acquisition of cultural understanding. Implied in the courses offered for Track I is a third objective, acquisition of the skills necessary for teaching children in bilingual and in English-for-speakers-of-other-languages classes.

During the first project year, the evaluation approach was formative, with emphasis on materials produced as part of the ongoing instruction. These materials reflected the values of the faculty, as well as the attainments of the students, and were especially valuable for a program in the beginning stages of its development.

OBJECTIVE 1 - To Demonstrate Ability in Understanding, Speaking and Reading Spanish as Used by the Hispanic Community in the Philadelphia Area.

During the Fall semester, the first course in the Spanish for Educators sequence was offered. At the beginning and end of the semester, every student was asked to speak in Spanish about a given topic for a few minutes. The student's speech was taperecorded and rated on five five-point scales: Pronunciation, Grammar, Fluency, Idioms, and Vocabulary.

Table 1 summarizes the instructor's ratings of the ten students in her class. Statistically significant improvement ($p < .01$) was found for all five ratings of oral proficiency and for an overall score that was derived from the others. At the time of the pretesting, the average overall score was 3.0, indicating that the typical level of performance was at the center of the instructor's internal language competence scale, and that the students were already reasonably fluent in Spanish. The performance of the participants improved, on average, by just under one point, or about half the amount possible, to 3.9.

At the time of the pretesting, the average idiom score of 2.4 was noteworthy because it was well below the others. At the time of the post-testing, the idiom score continued to be the lowest, 3.6, but it was no longer outlying. It, and the average rating for two other measures, Fluency and Vocabulary, had improved by more than one point on the scale. The two remaining measures, Pronunciation and Grammar, grew by smaller amounts.

The data in the table indicated that progress toward attaining the speaking skills aspect of the objective had been made. Progress in other Spanish language skill areas was probably made as well, and these should be examined in the future.

OBJECTIVE 2 - To Demonstrate the Acquisition of Cultural Understanding.

Two Track I courses involved the students in activities that led to cultural understanding. In the Fall term, the Dynamics of Cross-cultural Communication course dealt directly with this topic. In the Spring term, the Contrastive Analysis of the History of Latin America and the United States course dealt with the historical bases of the cultural differences found in the Americas.

Students kept logs of their experiences in the Dynamics course. Twelve logs, all that had not been returned to the students when the evaluator's association with the Project began, were examined. An attempt was made to abstract from them the effects of the course and the values that led to high grades.

Table 2 is a summary of the findings. The first four characteristics listed in the table were suggested by the course instructor. Items 5 through 7 were developed by the evaluator because they characterized the logs that were given high grades. From the table, it is evident that most of the items suggested by the instructor were found in virtually all the logs. At least one description of a classroom experience, and at least one instance of the student's drawing a conclusion, could be found in every log. All but one contained a description of the student's feelings about an activity in the class.

One quarter of the students had difficulty using past experiences to support their conclusions, and this was one of the criteria that distinguished the logs that earned the highest grades from the others.

Three other characteristics of the better logs were: references to readings, an absence of errors in English usage (in the logs that were written in English), and their length (short logs had low grades). The pattern suggested that while the Dynamics course succeeded in its primary purpose of helping the students to acquire cross-cultural understanding, its logs raised the issue of whether some of the students needed help with writing and whether others had a clear idea of the amount of work expected in the program.

The best logs read like an egocentric anthropologist's notes, with self-revelations, descriptions of events, and insights from readings intertwined. Two events seemed to have affected the students' sense of the world about them the most, a culture simulation game, Bafa-Bafa, and a Puerto-Rican-oriented Mass at the city's main cathedral. The logs suggested that both events immersed the students in environments in which the rules governing appropriate behavior were unfamiliar, with great emotional impact as well as intellectual stimulation.

Test booklets and term papers written for the Contrastive History course were also examined. Of these, the term papers provided the most direct evidence about the acquisition of cultural understanding, whereas the tests showed factual knowledge. For this reason, the term papers were examined with care, and the tests were set aside.

Half the term papers contrasted various waves of immigration (e.g. Italian immigration to the United States and to Argentina, Puerto Rican immigration to Philadelphia and to New York). The remaining papers compared various religious groups, Indian cultures or systems of slavery in the Americas. The grades earned by the papers ranged from A through D, with seven of the ten earning a B or an A.

Criticisms of the papers were jotted down by the instructor while grading them. These were valuable because they made concrete the instructor's values. The most common criticisms were that the student used too few resources and that the student reported facts, but did not integrate them. These two points suggest that, to acquire cultural understanding, as defined for the course, one needed to build a structure out of various experts' ideas, and to apply it to more than one cultural situation.

The other term paper criticisms all referred to the preparation of papers in general: footnote formats, sentence structures, the proper use of quotations, and, in two instances, the misunderstanding of facts.

In conclusion, the logs and the term papers contained clear evidence that the Dynamics course and the Contrastive Analysis course both contributed to attainment of the Project goal of acquisition of cross-cultural understanding. The logs emphasized acquisition through direct experience, the term papers, through scholarship.

OBJECTIVE 3 - To Demonstrate Acquisition of Teaching Skills.

During the Spring semester the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages course was offered. The aim of the course was to show the students how to teach English to students with limited English proficiency in an efficient, effective way.

The final examination booklets were reviewed in order to document the students' attainment. Table 3 summarizes the findings. It shows the grade given to each test, the extent (in the evaluator's opinion) that the answers discussed teaching methods, and the frequency of the instructor's critical comments about errors and omissions.

The examination booklets suggested that there was strong emphasis on classroom technique in the course, with theory playing subordinate role. As shown on the table, frequent discussion of teaching techniques, as judged by the evaluator, and the number of criticisms noted by the instructor were both related

to the grades earned by the students. Whereas the most common criticism of the tests was that the student failed to show how theory should be applied to instruction, a tabulation of the frequency that the students mentioned the names of authors and theorists (not shown on the table) was unrelated to grade. This suggested that, for this course, the sources of ideas were not as important as knowledge of how to apply them.

The test booklets contained ample evidence that at least the two-thirds of the students who earned grades in the A and B range had learned specialized techniques for teaching English to children whose first language was not English. These students had made progress toward attaining the objective of acquiring teaching skills.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first year of the La Salle College Bilingual/Bicultural Master of Arts Program was fully implemented. Except for the absence of second-year courses, the program had all the appearances of being a mature endeavor when the evaluator came on the scene at mid-year. The observed courses were well organized and exceptional because the faculty brought about the engrossing atmosphere that is advocated in, but rarely implemented in, graduate programs about education.

The formative evaluation of student achievement, confined to courses serving Track I students, relied on teacher ratings and on products produced as part of the ongoing instructional program. The data suggested that most students were doing acceptable graduate work and making progress toward the Program objectives of acquiring Spanish language skills, developing a broader cultural understanding, and acquiring teaching skills. When particular students were not succeeding at an endeavor, it occasionally appeared that the mechanics of doing acceptable graduate work, such as writing, library research skills and integrating divergent views,contributed to their problem, and that some students could have benefitted from help in these areas.

Specialists in bilingual education recognize that the various language skills, understanding, speaking, reading and writing, emerge at different rates. The bilinguality of the members of the faculty permitted the incorporation of this recognition into the instructional program. The English-dominant students had opportunities to develop Spanish skills in courses, and to reinforce them in social communication. The Spanish-dominant students were immersed in an English environment that provided them with ample opportunity to develop their English skills. But, because of the Spanish competence of the faculty, when the Spanish-dominant students had to contend with scholarly writing, a language skill that usually develops late, they were able to use their mother tongue without penalty. This pattern is consistent with the Bilingual Program philosophy

that one should be permitted to use one's stronger language if communication is facilitated.

In conclusion, the project was well conceived and managed. It was consistent with the philosophy of Bilingual Education, and there was good evidence that students were making progress toward its goals.

TABLE I

AVERAGE ORAL SKILL RATINGS

SPANISH FOR EDUCATORS

	PRONUN.	GRAMMAR	FLUENCY	IDIOMS	VOCABULARY	OVERALL
PRESCORE:	3.2	3.0	3.3	2.4	3.1	3.0
POSTSCORE:	3.8	3.7	4.2	3.6	4.2	3.9
F (df=1/9)	13.5	21.0	14.9	36.0	37.6	68.8
p>	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF DYNAMICS OF CROSS CULTURAL

COMMUNICATION LOGS

CHARACTERISTIC	LOGS DISPLAYING CHARACTERISTICS	
	Number	Percent
1. Class experiences were described	12	100
2. Contained student's opinions, conclusions	12	100
3. Contained student's feelings	11	92
4. Contined evidence for opinions, conclusions	9	75
5. Readings were cited	8	67
6. Frequent errors of English usage. *	8	89
7. Short length noted by instructors	4	33

*This rating was limited to the nine logs written in English.

TABLE 3

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

REVIEW OF FINAL EXAMINATIONS

STUDENT	MENTIONS SPECIFIC TEACHING TECHNIQUES*	No. OF INSTRUCTOR'S CRITICISMS	GRADE
NB	Frequently	0	A+
CP	Frequently	0	A+
MC	Frequently	3	A
WL	Frequently	1	A
MR	Frequently	0	A
JH	Frequently	1	A
SC	Frequently	1	A-
IR (Spanish)	Frequently	1	A-
JS	Occasionally	2	B+
CS	Occasionally	1	B
RS	Occasionally	3	B-
JB	Frequently	5	B-
-W	Occasionally	4	C+
SR	Occasionally	0	C+
JH	Never	3	D
EM	Frequently	1	No Grade

*Key Frequently - mentions technique in almost every concept
Occasionally - mentions technique for about half the concept
Never - does not mention techniques.